

DL E-tivity 4 Assessment

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ESSAY TITLE

Some threats to Western hegemony are routinely exaggerated. Discuss with reference to China.

ESSAY PLAN

Introduction:

- Two schools of thought inform predictions of China's role in the world in the foreseeable future. One sees it as a threat to Western hegemony and another as a willing partner in the existing global order. **Although that may be a rather crude binary as there are shades of opinion within those two broad 'camps'**
- China's stance will be discussed with reference to economic, political, security, strategic, energy and socio-cultural dimensions since each emphasizes a different set of factors in the evolving Sino-American bilateral relationship. External variables likely to influence this relationship will then be identified and brought to bear on the attempt to identify China's likely future behaviour on the international arena.
- Arguments for and against a new hegemony will be considered and shown to be of secondary relevance and insufficient power to both mark a change in the cooperative spirit and non-aggressive nature with which China has sought to forge a new place for itself in the multilateral world it favours, and to reverse the growing relevance of multilateralism as the method of choice for consensual engagement and global integration. **This is rather convoluted and vaguely expressed. Look for clarity in your phrasing.**

Analysis:

- Why is China perceived as a threat to western hegemony and by whom?
 - China and the West differ in their world-views, strategic interests, and political systems and this has led to contentious relations. This lack of common interests and values has made China and the West strategic competitors on a variety of fronts, ensuring mutual distrust.
 - China's rapid ascendance is seen ominously by Japan, whose regional pre-eminence

is being gradually eroded by increased Chinese economic clout. Given Japan's past aggression against China, it has reasons to fear that if supplanted as regional leader Japan will be marginalized by China. Japan being the only Asian nation that is fully integrated into the Western system, its decline will mark the end of Western hegemony in the region.

- For America the notion of no longer being in charge of the world by policing other nation's actions and dictating the terms of international engagement is hard to accept. **Be careful of overstatement** For China, the notion of continued American hegemony in Asia is equally hard to accept. China, as the only rising power with the potential to challenge American hegemony, is therefore viewed with mistrust. This mistrust is exacerbated by certain aspects of the American system.
 - In the absence of the Soviet Union, it is in the interest of America's industrial-military establishment to exaggerate the Chinese threat. **(evidence that this is occurring?)**
 - A culture of militarism and America's transformation post 9/11 into a near police state **(wild exaggeration – please avoid such hyperbole)** only encourages a suspicious and belligerent attitude towards the rising power and status of China.
- Power transitions have in the past led to conflict and war. However, since they unfold according to the “*nature of rising state's regime and the degree of dissatisfaction with the old order*” (Ikenberry, 2008), China being neither a belligerent state nor dissatisfied with or marginalized by the global system, its future is most likely to be envisioned as part of the existing multilateral order. Several factors support this outcome:
 - China is fully integrated in the international order and its “*economic interests are congruent with the current global economic system*” (Ikenberry, 2008). **Broadly, yes, although it may feel a strong interest in seeking to expand its power within multilateral institutions which may become a source of friction with those who 'lose' in that transition**
 - China needs access to the global capitalist system and protection from discrimination through the system's rules and institutions, principally the WTO's multilateral trade principles and dispute-settlement mechanisms.
 - China is gaining access to the inner circle of the international economic institutions that govern the current system.
 - As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China already enjoys the benefits of “great-power exceptionalism”.
 - While China may well surpass the US in economic and military power, it will not overshadow the economic and military capacity of the Western system as a whole. China's economy and military will always be much smaller than the combined capacities of the OECD countries.

- China is feared for its unwillingness to embrace democracy and for the threat it poses to democracy once it becomes the most powerful economy on earth, which is predicted to occur by 2020 (whether it will be the most powerful economy by then is a moot point, it will still fall well behind the US in crucial indicators – GDP per capita, research and development, education).
 - While democracy is not on the agenda of China's CCP, the trend has been towards more individual freedom and social openness, and various piecemeal approaches are used to test the viability of more political openness. Shanghai, for instance, has adopted China's first provincial-level open information legislation on January 20, 2004, as a first step towards open government.
 - The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), it could be argued, is in effect two parties in one. The two major factions within the CCP, the radicals and the moderates (also known as the conservatives and the reformers), differ fundamentally in their visions for national development and are in many respects as disparate as are America's democrats and republicans. While the radicals pursue "*the achievement of political consciousness, ideological devotion to communism, and human liberation*" (i.e. "redness") and seek the political and ideological control of the populace, promoting social equality and opposing economic stratification, the moderates, whose "*approach to national development is mainly economic and technical, and much less political and ideological...focus on the material and moral improvement of people's lives,*" and want to develop the skills and qualifications of the workforce (i.e. "expertise") (Tsang, 2000).
 - The current deadlock between liberals and conservatives, some have argued (Gong-Qin Xiao, 2002), may help create the preconditions for political reform. This is especially likely, since economic development has already given rise to modest social pluralism and interest groups and this will eventually lead to political "bargaining" within the political system, instead of ideological battle.
- The very idea of hegemony is a remnant of unipolar thinking in a multipolar world, leading to a refusal to see the new world order as a cooperative effort towards consensus between equal state actors. Given China's cooperation with every multinational institution, it is safe to conclude that China is a firm supporter of a multilateral world order and that it is not about to seek hegemony. Furthermore, China could not become the new hegemon even if it wanted. Several factors prevent it from fulfilling such an ambition:
 - Lacks internal cohesion. Its many ethnic, religious and tribal entities are loosely held together by a manufactured national identity based on the forced use of Putonghua as the language of national unity.
 - China is not even equipped to exercise control over the country let alone over the world. Although an authoritarian state, it lacks effective centralised control being fragmented by its many power bases in the provinces which are in a constant

struggle with the central government. “*China is held together by the formal structure of authority*” (Lieberthal & Oksenberg, 1990) and not by real authority and has difficulty enforcing the directives emanating from the central government partly because it has five levels of government that overlap and compete for authority.

- Past and present actions as well as the character of the Chinese people show a nation willing to work in concord with other nations to reach mutually beneficial agreements rather than to challenge existing power structures to advance solely its own interests.
 - China’s strategic plans are peaceful and non-threatening and are concerned with addressing three big challenges it faces: shortage of resources, environmental pollution, and lack of coordination between economic and social development. To address these concerns it has devised three grand strategies (Bijian, 2005):
 - realizing a new model of industrialization that is based on low consumption and optimal allocation of human resources so as to achieve a society of thrift,
 - transcending ideological differences while striving for peace, development and cooperation with the world, and
 - constructing a harmonious socialist society by supplanting outdated methods of social control with self-governance
- China is rising at a time and in a world defined by the postwar Western order which is distinctive because liberal and non-discriminatory, accessible and legitimated by its shared leadership and by the fact that it is rule based and has global institutions to enforce the rules. More than that, it has mechanisms for security cooperation, expansive economic growth, and has an open and multilateral character. It is therefore easier to join than it is to overturn and the incentive for China is to integrate into the liberal international order rather than challenge it, especially given the economic and technological interdependence of the day.
- China has always sought to solve its problems internally rather than export them through expansionary intrusions on the territories or resources of others.
 - One-child policy ensures China can live within its means and is not forced by dint of impending social chaos to colonise or invade other people and lands.
 - Non-aggression is the avowed policy of the CCP and there are no precedents save for Tibet to indicate that China is not sincere in its aspirations for peace and cooperation with the world. *Although official declarations are of limited utility here (the Soviet Union provided a seemingly endless series of such reassurances) and in any case past Chinese actions when it was a weak state may not be a reliable guide to the actions of an infinitely more powerful state*
 - The rural-urban divide, maintained through residence permits, serves as an internal safety valve, making China a microcosmic model of the global economy and allowing it to contain the effects of failed policies within its borders.
- Different dimensions paint a different picture. While China and the US have common

economic interests and interdependencies they do not have common military and diplomatic interests or shared cultural and political values.

○ Economic dimension

The overarching point of contention is Beijing's state-dominated model of development versus America's liberal economy model. This has engendered flashpoints along the following issues:

- The US trade deficit with China has led Washington to call on Beijing to liberalize its exchange rate, allow true market-oriented reform, abolish antimonopoly laws, protect intellectual property rights, reduce state intervention in the economy and permit capital to exit China. Failure to do so, it is feared, will only exacerbate already dangerous trade imbalances between China and the US.
- In return, Beijing argues that, especially in light of the recent global economic meltdown, finance-driven economic integration must be carefully controlled. China also expects the US to lift restrictions on technology sales and worries about the security of the US Treasury bonds it continues to buy despite the declining value of the dollar and the ailing American economy.
- China's mercantilist currency policies have been blamed for the trade imbalances that have contributed to the US trade deficit, whose unintended by-product has been that China stockpiled large US dollar reserves that it then placed in US government securities, leading to a capital glut and to reckless lending by US banks.
- China has called for an end to the dollar's dominance in the international monetary system and for a global reserve currency based on the weighted average of a basket of currencies that includes the Yuan. Since the dollar accounts for 65% of the world's foreign exchange reserves, and China holds one-third of these, America's massive printing of money in response to the financial crisis has caused concerns in China that the value of its substantial dollar reserves is being undermined. However, China cannot dump its stock of dollars without triggering a collapse of the currency. To get out of the "dollar trap" China has suggested two solutions: a new global currency and the international use of the Yuan (*The Economist*, 2009), neither of which bodes well for the US. This could very well prove to be a flaring point in Sino-American relations. For the time being, however, China needs access to the US market and the US needs China to prop its currency.

The nature of the Sino-US economic relationship is one of irreversible interdependence. As long as American self-interest propels Chinese economic prosperity the two nations will seek cooperation for the sake of their mutual long-term interests and are unlikely to resort to conflict to satisfy short-term objectives. Accommodation rather than trade war will define Sino-US economic engagement.

○ Military and strategic dimension

The overarching point of contention between China and America is pre-eminence and leadership in East Asia. This has engendered several flashpoints between the two powers:

- China is unhappy with the current American dominated regional-security architecture (America's bilateral alliances with countries in the region, its forward deployed military forces in East Asia, NATO expansion in the region, the extension of the 'Partnership for Peace' to Central Asia, the US Pacific Command's (PACOM) naval stranglehold of the Pacific, and the potential deployment of theatre and national missile defences (TMD/NMD) in Japan and other allies in the region), which it views as a grand strategy of containment against China. Particularly vexing for China is the issues of US arms sales to Taiwan, which is the most fundamental security grievance between the two nations.
- The US, in return, resents China's assertiveness in respect to Taiwan (China's increased deployment of short-range ballistic missiles directed at Taiwan, its refusal to renounce the use of force against Taiwan even as it professes 'peaceful reunification', its refusal to accept the rationale for US presence in the region, and its increasing range of ballistic missile systems) and the South-China Sea (where China has increased its naval presence and assertiveness). However, given China's inferior military capabilities, the US and its allies have little to fear. The Taiwan issue entails an irreconcilable dilemma for Sino-American relations; China will not accept Taiwan independence and the US will not accept Chinese interference in Taiwan's right to self-determination.
- China's visceral reaction and reprisals to any foreign country receiving the Dalai Lama shows just how sensitive and unreasonable China is in regards to Tibet. Its fear of Tibetan nationalism and secessionism could trigger a dangerous overreaction in China with negative economic implications though less significant consequences for world peace and security.
- Common interests, however, trump differences. They encompass the need to maintain regional stability, peace on the Korean peninsula, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and a wide range of non-conventional security threats. These have engendered cooperation on low security threats (fighting narcotics production and smuggling, organized crime, illegal migrants smuggling) and even on select high security threats (controlling weapons of mass destruction, nuclear proliferation, delivery systems for nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, North Korea, nuclear-arms control, export controls of fissile and other sensitive materials).

As long as China does not force its hand on Taiwan and the US does not stand in the way of Taiwan's closer economic integration with China and their gradual rapprochement, there are no irreconcilable differences that would necessitate either armed conflict or a new cold war.

○ Political dimension

The deep ideological divide separating China and the West on national and international governance issues makes a strategic partnership inconceivable over the short-term but possible if they continue to engage with one another and give each other room to evolve.

- Beijing is sharply critical of American hegemony and US attempts to

maintain a unipolar world. While China seeks a multipolar world in which nations respect their differences and maintain peaceful and mutually beneficial economic and diplomatic relations regardless of their internal makeup, abuses, and inequalities, the US seeks global leadership to expand the number of democracies and market economies and to build a global security architecture that it alone controls and that is favourable to its own interests.

- The US is sharply critical of China's one-party autocracy, its selective economic liberalization without the requisite political plurality, its human rights abuses, its repression of free speech, and its suppression of an independent judiciary.
- These differences are being fought over on the international arena through efforts to influence the very structure and norms of international relations and are manifested in:
 1. America's expansion and strengthening of bilateral and multilateral security alliances and in China's counter efforts to have such military alliances and pacts abrogated.
 2. Differences over the limits of national sovereignty and the acceptability of humanitarian interventions that defy sovereignty as well as the role of the UN in legitimating such intrusions.
 3. Differences in approach regarding trade and monetary issues, the degree of market liberalization versus national control, and expanding the role of the IMF and the World Bank to deal with transnational rules for capital movement.

Given the large size of the two camps of thought, the historical depth of each camp's political system, and the low level of interference in and tolerance for each other's internal affairs, conflict along political lines will occur within the international framework of political engagement and will be waged as dialogue and posturing. The unappealing nature of China's political system and China's lack of interest in promulgating it abroad ensure that the Western liberal model will continue to be the one other nations will aspire to.

○ Energy dimension

China's basis for engagement with the world is to propel the country towards industrial modernization, which is unachievable given the country's large population and modest natural resources without access to the global market of mineral resources. This has created a competitive environment between developed nations, whose mature economies are large consumers of energy, and developing nations like China, whose rapidly developing economy is in need of ever greater primary resources.

- A growing gap between domestic supply and demand for energy resources has forced China to abandon its traditional goal of energy self-sufficiency and to look abroad, driving China's foreign policy. Meeting the country's demand for oil and natural gas has become a primary objective. As the world's second-largest oil importer and an economy that continues to grow at 9% per annum, China's appetite for key mineral resources continues to grow

and is expected to double, from 20% to 40% of the global total, within a decade. Growth being the cornerstone of China's social stability and China being a government-driven economy, Beijing has been forced "*to adapt its foreign policy to its domestic development strategy*" (Zweig & Jianghai, 2005) with negative consequences on foreign policy issues where Beijing and Washington do not see eye-to-eye.

- Peak oil at a time of growing demand due to Chinese modernization and growing industrialization in developing countries have given rise to fear in the West that there is not enough oil in the world to satisfy both Western and Chinese needs. These fears have been exacerbated by China's direct investments in the economies of repressive regimes that challenge the Western order; direct investments in oil exploration and development projects in oil-producing states in the Middle East, where the US maintains heavy military presence to secure its own energy needs; plans for a strategic petroleum reserve, which hold military implications; the internationalization of the China National Petroleum Corporation, which is seen as an aggressive measure to gain a foothold in oil markets hitherto monopolized by the US and its allies; and China's cultivation of closer diplomatic relations with oil-exporting countries, like Iran and Venezuela, that are antagonistic to American hegemony. Yet by diversifying its suppliers and encouraging its national oil companies to acquire assets abroad, China is doing nothing more than following Western nations to ensure its own energy security.
- China's growing dependence on imported oil trumps humanitarian, democratic and non-proliferation considerations towards countries it relies on for its energy needs (Myanmar, Angola, Iran, and Sudan) and has forced China to oppose US containment plans for Iran's nuclear ambitions and the US occupation of Iraq, and to weaken the language of Security Council resolutions to punish Sudan for its actions in Darfur.
- In return, China regards its dependence on foreign oil as a strategic vulnerability that could be exploited by the US to coerce China to accept unfair terms. Beijing also fears the US will deny China access to oil crucial to its continued economic development and that it will use its dominance of the sea-lanes to do so. To avoid this, China is attempting to promote the development of Central Asian and Russian oil fields and the construction of pipelines to transport oil from these regions to China.

For the time being, China's quest for energy security collides with American interests only in Sudan and Iran, posing no serious threat to their competitive yet peaceful relationship. China's unwillingness to jeopardise its oil supply for Western objectives, however, along with its efforts to reduce the vulnerability of its energy supply to US power, will give rise to fiercer competition in the near future, as the gap between global oil production and demand widens and the US will not tolerate being supplanted by China from its position of control of the world's major oil and gas fields.

○ Human and social dimension

China's cultural heritage is shaped by the ethical principles of three peaceful religious traditions – Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism – the result of which China, despite being a secular and authoritarian society since 1949, seeks peaceful and cooperative relations with other countries.

- China's cultural practices and thought systems are pluralist, tolerant and non-dogmatic as a result of its religious heritage and shape the Chinese emphasis on finding one's natural place in the order of things (a Taoist inheritance); creating a harmonious society and a virtuous state and treating all people with humanity (Confucian inheritances); and abstaining from harmful actions, training a disciplined mind, and seeking a proper understanding of the self and the world (Buddhist inheritances). China's foreign policy objectives reflect this religious heritage and foretell a cooperative not a belligerent China.
- Deference towards the West due to the recognition that it is superior in terms of science and technology and that therefore China has much to learn from it if it is to reach an equal level of modernization, enforces a one-sided relationship between China and the West, whereby the West and especially the US has a transforming influence on China's culture and society, while China has little or no impact on Western culture and society. This foretells China's evolution towards Western principles and not away from them.

While China's foreign policy seeks to address real geopolitical interests and national objectives, its approach is informed by the benign character of its cultural traditions and by the deference with which it views the West for its scientific and technological superiority. This suggests that China is not about to challenge Western hegemony as much as seek a place for itself in the current system.

Conclusion:

China is neither a strategic partner nor a hostile adversary of the West. Being a country with few aggressive tendencies and precedents (Tibet being the exception) and with a stance of deference and respect for Western achievements and abilities in science and technology as well as in culture, China does not intend to challenge the Western order but merely to coexist and prosper within the existing international framework and to make positive contributions to a more accommodating transnational polity. China's only ambition is to be viewed as an equal and willing partner in the struggle to bring prosperity and peace to the world.

The only subject of contention is China's intransigence and lack of tolerance for outside interference in the integrity of its borders and on the sovereignty to make its own decisions on what it views as internal matters, which, unfortunately, also include Taiwan and Tibet. However, since the West and China are completely interdependent in economic terms, they are not about to jeopardise their prosperity and world peace by provoking each other.

The only serious area of potential conflict is access to energy sources, which due to dwindling supplies and increasing global demand will pose a global problem that can only be resolved by rapid technological progress on renewable energy and the attendant political will to retool one's economy away from sole dependence on fossil fuels. Since both China and the US are late starters in this respect, they may not make sufficient progress in time to survive the next energy crisis without recourse to predatory actions that will lead to armed conflict between them.

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COMMENTS

Structure

This plan is in most respects not a plan at all. It is 4,800 words – a full 3,800 words longer than the recommended length for the E-tivity. It simply doesn't work as a plan and if the various sections identified here were extended still further (a reasonable assumption) the final essay will be approaching 10,000 words in length. Thus, this particular document fails to meet the basic purposes of an essay plan

Analysis & Content

The content is perfectly competent and it identifies a range of useful areas for discussion. However, at 4,800 words this is hardly surprising and the scope to develop these ideas further in the way that you hope does not exist given the 5,000 word limit.

Areas for improvement

Please remember to submit assessed work in accordance with the guidelines

The final essay will have to be selective in its approach if you are not to be penalised for excessive length.

Summary

This was an unhelpful plan (a plan cannot be as long as the essay itself) and it displayed an unwillingness to edit and to summarise issues. The length is unacceptable. Economy of expression is a core skill you must develop.

Recommendation for E-tivity 5

Deudney, D and Ikenberry, J G 'The Myth of the Autocratic Revival: Why Liberal Democracy Will Prevail' FOREIGN AFFAIRS, Jan/Feb 2009

Second Marker's comments

Kevin, you clearly have a broad and comprehensive grasp of the issues relating to China's status, position and development in the post-Cold War world system, so your knowledge is not in question. However, this piece is not an essay plan. It is far too long and ambitious in what it sets out to achieve. You must be much more selective in what you focus on. You can certainly refer in passing to many of the issues you note above, but I recommend you pick out the 2 or 3 you consider most significant to your case and concentrate the bulk of your attention on them. This will ensure you do yourself justice in the final assignment, and also that you will be within the specified word limit. I concur with the 1st marker's comments and score. NJW

Mark

6/15